

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 1808

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: SHIA DEMARCHE

1. SHIA DEPUTY ABDEL LATIF ZEIN CAME TO SEE ME APRIL 20 AT REQUEST OF IMAM MUSA SADR AND SHIA COUNCIL TO ASK OUR HELP WITH SITUATION IN SOUTH. BRIEFLY, PEOPLE OF SOUTH WANTED BE LEFT IN PEACE, BUT THERE WERE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORCES AT WORK OVER WHICH THEY HAD NO CONTROL. SPECIFICALLY, THE SHIA ASKED THAT ARAB SECURITY FORCES BE ALLOWED TO ENTER REGION AND POLICE IT. FAILING THAT, THEY REQUESTED THAT WE URGE RESTRAINT ON ISRAELIS, PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNISTS TO PREVENT RESUMPTION OF FIGHTING.

2. I SAID THERE NO POSSIBILITY ISRAELIS WOULD CHANGE POSITION ON ENTRY OF ARAB FORCES AND ASKED WHAT SITUATION WAS ON GROUND AT PRESENT. HE SAID IT GENERALLY QUIET, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS OCCASIONAL SHELLING, USUALLY STARTED BY CHRISTIANS. OF NABATIYAH'S 50,000(SIC) CIVILIAN INHABITANTS, PERHAPS 100 REMAINED IN TOWN. HE HAD COUNTED EXACTLY ELEVEN IN THE SUQ ON SUNDAY MORNING.

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MARJAYUN WAS DIVIDED, WITH THE CHRISTIAN FORCES HOLDING THE HEIGHTS AND SAIQA CONTROLLING THE LOWER TOWN. KHIAM WAS IN THE HANDS OF THE PALESTINIANS. THEY HAD KILLED TWELVE MEMBERS OF THE ABDALLAH FAMILY ON TAKING THE TOWN.

3. I ASKED IF PEOPLE OF SOUTH COULD LIVE WITH

PRESENT SITUATION IF THERE WERE NO FIGHTING. HE SAID THEY COULD, BUT THEY COULD NOT LIVE AND WORK IF FIGHTING WAS GOING ON. HE THEN SAID SHIA WERE WORKING ON PALESTINIANS TO GET COMMITMENT (ILTIZAM) NOT TO RESUME OFFENSIVE. COULD WE, THE AMERICANS, GET ONE FROM THE PHALANGE, WHO WERE KEY TO CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE?

4. I ASKED IF THEY DID NOT HAVE THEIR OWN CONTACTS WITH THE PHALANGE. ZEIN SAID THEY DID, BUT THEY HAD BEEN INCONCLUSIVE. PIERRE GEMAYEL CLAIMED HE DID NOT CONTROL FORCES ON THE GROUND, AND MADE VAGUE ALLUSIONS TO EXTERNAL FORCES. SHIA WERE CONVINCED PHALANGE AS WELL AS CHAMOUNISTS IN HANDS OF ISRAELIS AND LATTER TRYING TO KEEP SITUATION UNSTABLE.

5. I NOTED WE HAD MADE APPROACHES TO ALL THE PARTIES, EXCEPT PALESTINIANS, URGING RESTRAINT AND THAT THIS SEEMED TO HAVE HAD SOME EFFECT. IT WAS MY IMPRESSION THAT AT THIS POINT NO ONE HAD INTENTION OF TAKING OFFENSIVE, BUT GIVEN NUMBER OF ARMED MEN IN AREA, SITUATIONN INHERENTLY DANGEROUS. WE WOULD CONTINUE AS MATTER OF POLICY TO URGE RESTRAINT ON PARTIES, BUT COULD NOT GUARANTEE RESULTS.

6. COMMENT: AM PLANNING TO SEE BASHIR GEMAYEL AND DANY CHAMOUN THIS WEEKEND AND WILL DISCUSS ZEIN'S APPROACH WITH THEM. IF WE READ ATTITUDE OF CHAMOUNISTS AND PHALANGE CORRECTLY, THEY NOT NOW INTERESTED IN ASSUMING OFFENSIVE, HAVING
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DISCOVERED LIMITS OF ISRAELI SUPPORT AND THEIR OWN WEAKNESS IN NUMBERS VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS. PARKER

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NNN

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